

"It's frankly just deeply upsetting," said James D. Weill, president of the Washington-based Food and Action Center. As the economy eroded, Weill said, "you had more and more people getting pushed closer to the cliffs edge. Then this huge storm came along and pushed them over."

Obama, who pledged during last year's presidential campaign to eliminate hunger among children by 2015, reiterated that goal on Monday. "My Administration is committed to reversing the trend of rising hunger," the president said in a statement. The solution begins with job creation, Obama said. And he ticked off steps that Congress and the administration have taken, or are planning, including increases in food stamp benefits and \$85 million Congress just freed up through an appropriations bill to experiment with feeding more children during the summer, when subsidized school breakfasts and lunches are unavailable.

In a briefing for reporters, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "These numbers are a wake-up call . . . for us to get very serious about food security and hunger, about nutrition and food safety in this country."

Vilsack attributed the marked worsening in Americans' access to food primarily to the rise in unemployment, which now exceeds 10 percent, and in people who are underemployed. He acknowledged that "there could be additional increases" in the 2009 figures, due out a year from now, although he said it is not yet clear how much the problem might be eased by the measures the administration and Congress have taken this year to stimulate the economy.

The report's main author at USDA, Mark Nord, noted that other recent research by the agency has found that most families in which food is scarce contain at least one adult with a full-time job, suggesting that the problem lies at least partly in wages, not entirely an absence of work.

The report suggests that federal food assistance programs are only partly fulfilling their purpose, although Vilsack said that shortages would be much worse without them. Just more than half of the people surveyed who reported they had food shortages said that they had, in the previous month, participated in one of the government's largest anti-hunger and nutrition programs: food stamps, subsidized school lunches or WIC, the nutrition program for women with babies or young children.

Last year, people in 4.8 million households used private food pantries, compared with 3.9 million in 2007, while people in about 625,000 households resorted to soup kitchens, nearly 90,000 more than the year before.

Food shortages, the report shows, are particularly pronounced among women raising children alone. Last year, more than one in three single mothers reported that they struggled for food, and more than one in seven said that someone in their home had been hungry—far eclipsing the food problem in any other kind of household. The report also found that people who are black or Hispanic were more than twice as likely as whites to report that food in their home was scarce.

In the survey used to measure food shortages, people were considered to have food insecurity if they answered "yes" to several of a series of questions. Among the questions were whether, in the past year, their food sometimes ran out before they had money to buy more, whether they could not afford to eat nutritionally balanced meals, and whether adults in the family sometimes cut the size of their meals—or skipped them—because they lacked money for food. The report defined the degree of their food insecurity by the number of the questions to which they answered yes.

ANIMAL WELFARE IS IMPORTANT FOR THE ENTIRE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it seems the issues that face Congress fall into two categories: the issues that are so great, so expensive, so contentious, so complex that they seem almost beyond our ability to influence—war and peace, the economy, climate change and, more recently, health care—too big and too controversial for effective, quick, meaningful congressional action. The other category seems to be the simple and the mundane, almost too routine—housekeeping, like renaming a post office.

The truth is, we pursue both because they're an important part of our job and are important to the American public. We're not going to give up on the big issues of the day no matter how complex, controversial and frustrating because, after all, they are the big issues of the day. That's why we're here when even modest impact can have a huge ripple effect on lives around the world, the safety of Americans, protecting the public Treasury and our soldiers. A post office may seem mundane and trivial to some, but to the family of that fallen hero and community, it's very important indeed, as it is to all Americans who honor and respect that sacrifice. There is a reason for these items, low cost but high impact. Then there are vast numbers of issues that are sort of in between. Animal welfare is often put in that category, seemingly at times unimportant or trivial, tangential—except, of course, when it has a devastating impact on human health, safety and environmental balance.

I was recently touring the Everglades with my colleague DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Part of the briefing materials dealt with the problem of up to 100,000 pythons that started out as pets or exotic curiosities and ended up in that environment. Pets, farm animals, even whole alligators have been attacked and ingested. Earlier this summer, an infant in its crib was strangled by a python. Too expensive? Secondary? What's the price of that baby's life? And how much are we going to try to spend to reclaim the Everglade habitat from tens of thousands of pythons that have been described as the most lethal killing machine ever?

Earlier this year, I had legislation that overwhelmingly passed this House to ban the interstate transport of primates. It had been derided by one of my colleagues as a "monkey bite bill," ironically at just the same time a woman in Connecticut had her face ripped off by a neighbor's pet chimpanzee. I don't use that term metaphorically. Her face was literally ripped off. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the woman who was so horribly disfigured had the courage to take her story and her mangled face to the public on The

Oprah Winfrey Show this week. I simply cannot bring myself to display the picture on the floor of the House, but millions of viewers saw the tragic evidence for themselves.

It's too late for this woman and her family, but it's not too late for the other body to act so that we can make events like this less likely. It's a symbol of the dysfunctionality of the other body that one Member—ironically a doctor, of all people—has put a hold on this legislation, refusing to allow the Senate to even consider it, and inexplicably, the other body goes along. The reason, we're told, is cost. The Senator is concerned about cost. Well, what is the cost to a woman whose eyes were torn out of her head so she couldn't see her daughter on prom night? What is the cost of the unbelievable reconstructive surgery, taking flesh from her leg to try to replace part of the missing face?

Mr. Speaker, animal welfare is about much more than concern for God's creatures. It's about human welfare. It's about environmental balance. And yes, to the good doctor from Oklahoma, it's about saving money.

The millions of Americans who watched The Oprah Winfrey Show saw the tragic case and its consequences. They should ask themselves why their Senators are not speaking out, why the other body is not passing this simple bill that can have such significant consequences. It may not change the world, but if it prevents just a few cases like this, it will be another example of simple legislation that we cannot afford not to pass.

SUPPORT FOR THE AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. I rise today to commend those who have endeavored to improve the provision of quality, affordable health care for all Americans and to refute those who use scare tactics to derail essential health insurance reform.

During the more than 12 hours of debate on the House floor on November 7, we heard a number of speeches from some forecasting various doom and gloom scenarios. Some of the material focused more on scaring the American public than on presenting actual facts. We heard preposterous stories of death panels and prisons, denial of care and dramatic cuts in services, but the purveyors of fear ignored the hundreds of groups across the Nation that saw through the scare tactics and who support responsible health insurance reform. Those groups aren't driven by partisan ideology. They're focused on the well-being of their members. I would like to highlight just a few.

The scare tactic said this bill will harm seniors. In actuality, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will help seniors by closing the Medicare

part D prescription drug loophole that currently causes many seniors to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket, and it will help keep Medicare solvent and able to continue paying benefits well into the future. Without reform, Medicare part A will be insolvent by 2017. If we do nothing, Medicare hospital reimbursements will be cut by 2017. Without reform, premiums for Medicare part D doctor reimbursements are projected to increase an average of 8.5 percent every year through 2013. That's why the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare supports this bill. The Alliance for Retired Americans and the Center for Medicare Advocacy both support this bill. The National Council on Aging and the Medicare Rights Center both support this bill, as does the AARP.

The scare tactic said this bill would harm the ability of caregivers to provide lifesaving care. In actuality, doctors and medical providers know that this bill will preserve their ability to properly treat their patients and be fairly compensated. That's why the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Federation of American Hospitals support this bill. The American Academy of Physicians Assistants and the American College of Surgeons support this bill. The American Nurses Association and the American College of Physicians support this bill. And the American Medical Association supports this bill.

The scare tactic says this bill will deny care to those with life-threatening conditions, like cancer. In actuality, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will safeguard those with previous existing medical conditions and those in need of lifesaving procedures. That's why the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association support this bill. The American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network and the American Diabetes Association both support this bill. The Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities and the National Alliance on Mental Illness both support this bill. The National Breast Cancer Coalition and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance both support this bill, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America support this bill.

The scare tactic said this will wreck the economy. In actuality, this bill will help businesses—especially small businesses—control the spiraling cost of health care in America. Mr. Speaker, the Business Roundtable recently released a report that found that without reform, by 2019, employer-based health insurance payments will rise 166 percent. Without reform, those dramatic cost increases will endanger the economy, leaving employers and employees facing the untenable option of dropping coverage or laying off employees. The Business Roundtable's report found that the legislative reforms in the current health insurance bills could reduce employer costs by \$3,000 per employee by 2019. That's why the Main

Street Alliance supports the Affordable Health Care for America Act. The National Farmers Union supports the bill. The U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce supports the bill, as does the Small Business Majority.

The scare tactics said that the American people would suffer. In actuality, consumer advocacy groups know that this bill will provide Americans with their choice of affordable health care options. That's why the Consumers Union supports it, the Consumer Health Coalition supports it, and the National Patient Advocate Foundation supports it.

Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds more State and national organizations that refused to fall prey to diversionary scare tactics and supported this ground-breaking legislation on health care. The focus on these individual groups is disparate, but they share a common agenda with the majority of Americans and the majority of this House: Delivery now on the long overdue need for responsible health insurance reform.

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WE CAN DO BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Too many Americans are out of work. The stimulus certainly preserved some public sector jobs and was of benefit to public education and filled in some other gaps. But the rest of the spending has not been of great impact, particularly the \$340 billion in tax cuts insisted upon by three Republican Senators. And unfortunately, the Obama administration, at the urging of its chief economist, Larry Summers, caved in to those demands for yet more ineffective tax cuts, something that failed miserably during the Bush era to put the economy back on track, and failed again.

If you don't have a job, a tax cut doesn't do you much good and doesn't put you back to work, does it? So it's time for a new approach, considered, unfortunately by some, old school. That would be rebuilding the infrastructure of America.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, we have a \$2.2 trillion infrastructure deficit in this country. One hundred sixty thousand bridges on the Federal highway system are either load-limited or functionally obsolete. Our transit agencies across America have an \$80 billion backlog.

Now, the chief economist for the President, Mr. Larry Summers, an academic, doesn't think that infrastructure investment's a good thing. He cut it back in the stimulus last spring. But you know, actually, the 4 percent of that huge bill that went to infrastructure created 25 percent of the jobs. So perhaps Mr. Summers was wrong yet again, like he was when he prevented the Clinton administration from regulat-

ing derivatives, which caused our world collapse of the economy.

But he thinks that infrastructure takes too long to spend out. What he doesn't understand is, when you have a massive backlog, you have projects that can be put on the ground or to work immediately.

I'll use an example that's kind of close to home for the President. The Chicago Transit Authority, they have a \$6.8 billion backlog in their transit system. They testified before my committee that they could spend \$500 million tomorrow, tomorrow, productively, bringing that system back toward a state of good repair. It would still take another \$6.5 billion, \$6.3 billion, and it would take quite some time.

Now, they got out of the stimulus \$240.2 million for their transit backlog. They spent that money productively in 30 days. They bought buses. Guess what? You buy a bus, people who make buses have jobs. People who make parts for the buses have jobs. We have a "Buy America" rule. Those jobs are actually here in the United States of America, and then those people work and they pay taxes and there's revenues to the government; sort of a good old-fashioned way of stimulating the economy and helping the deficit. Unfortunately, the President's chief economist doesn't believe in this. It's time for him to reorient his thinking.

We need a massive investment in our infrastructure. It is so degraded that we have projects ready to go all across the country in transit districts, in States with bridge replacement. These aren't things that require five to 10 years of planning and a long spend-out and those things that those ethereal academic economists think about when they think about transportation infrastructure.

No, when you're in deficit, like the United States of America is today, when you're headed toward a Third World transportation infrastructure, while our competitors like China are spending hundreds of billions of dollars for high speed rail, what are we doing? We're struggling to keep Amtrak running at 19th century speeds. That's kind of pathetic.

We can do better. But it will take a commitment, a push by the White House, a reorientation in the thinking down there, or perhaps ignoring some bad advice they're getting, and have the President champion the creation of jobs and the rebuilding of our infrastructure. And you know, we can do this in a way that actually wouldn't have to add to the deficit.

They've done a great job of bailing out Wall Street. Goldman Sachs is going to be paying bonuses that average \$700,000 this year. Whoa, good times are here again, except not for an America that is suffering very high unemployment. So maybe it's time that Wall Street just gave back a little bit. We could reinstitute a tax we had from 1916 to 1966, a modest transaction tax.